

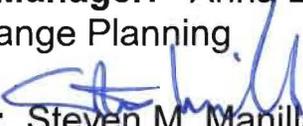


Travis County Commissioners Court Agenda Request

Meeting Date: August 29, 2013 **Work Session**

Prepared By: Randy Nicholson, TNR **Phone #:** (512) 854-4603

Division Director/Manager: Anna Bowlin, Division Director of Development Services & Long Range Planning

Department Head:  Steven M. Manilla, P.E., County Executive-TNR

Sponsoring Court Member: Commissioner Davis, Precinct One

AGENDA LANGUAGE: Receive brief on the Land, Water, and Transportation Plan's DRAFT Growth Guidance Plan Part 3 and Part 4 in Precinct One.

BACKGROUND/SUMMARY OF REQUEST:

TNR is completing the Land, Water, and Transportation Plan (LWTP) that will be a framework for comprehensively planning, managing, and regulating the land, water, and transportation services and programs TNR provides the county. The plan will set out long term goals and policies that will guide orderly growth and preservation of land and water resources in the unincorporated areas of the county. The plan is comprised of four documents that include the following:

1. Plan Background Report
2. Growth Guidance Plan (see attached)
3. Public Engagement Report
4. Executive Summary Brochure

The purpose of the agenda is to discuss the Growth Guidance Plan, Part Three: Opportunities and Challenges, and Part four: Growth Guidance.

Staff will also present the planning schedule including the public engagement process.

Finally, staff will report on the recent online Water Supply Survey.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

None

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES:

The various physical opportunities and constraints impacting how to balance development and natural resource protection were analyzed in this phase of the

Draft – August 29, 2013



TRAVIS COUNTY

THE LAND, WATER, AND TRANSPORTATION

GROWTH GUIDANCE PLAN

Prepared for the TRAVIS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT

Judge Samuel T. Biscoe, Travis County Judge

Commissioner Ron Davis, Precinct 1

Commissioners Sarah Eckhardt and Bruce Todd, Precinct 2

Commissioner Gerald Daugherty, Precinct 3

Commissioner Margaret Gómez, Precinct 4

by Transportation and Natural Resources

Steven M. Manilla, P.E., County Executive

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Peter Einhorn, Precinct 2

Bob Moore, Precinct 3

Edith Moreida, Precinct 4

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION

A. Travis County Plans for the Future

The population of Travis County is forecasted to grow to approximately 1.5 million people by 2035, and demand for county services will grow accordingly. The Land, Water, and Transportation Plan (LWTP) will provide a framework for how the county protects its land and water resources, builds transportation and park systems, and efficiently delivers related services to residents while maintaining a balanced budget. It is a set of long-term goals and policies that the Commissioners Court will use to guide orderly development and the appropriate conservation of land and water resources within the unincorporated areas of Travis County. It will accomplish the following:

- Identify where the county will incent development
- Identify where the county will incent conservation
- Provide guidance to minimize incompatible land uses
- Develop incentives via financial methods, policy and regulatory practices, and legislative initiatives
- Guide consistent collaboration with other governments and agencies at the regional and local level
- Help coordinate private and public investment

As with all Texas counties, Travis County must accomplish these objectives within the context of the legislative authority granted to counties by the state legislature. While cities need to determine whether a proposed ordinance violates state law, counties need to determine whether a proposed ordinance is allowed by state law. Travis County and other urban counties are seeking additional authority so they can effectively manage growth within their jurisdiction.

B. Vision, Guiding Values, and Mission

VISION FOR TRAVIS COUNTY

Travis County's vision for the county is one of an open, diverse community where all people are safe and healthy and can fulfill their hopes and dreams; where people enjoy a good quality of life and natural and cultural resources are protected for us and future generations.

VALUES THAT GUIDE TRAVIS COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Taking responsibility and being accountable, fostering public trust, providing good customer service and excellence in performance, practicing sound fiscal policy, respecting and caring for the individual, acting with transparency, honesty and openness, and working in collaboration and cooperation with others.

TRAVIS COUNTY MISSION

Our mission is to preserve health, provide a safety net for the needy, ensure the public safety, facilitate the resolution of disputes, foster an efficient transportation system, promote recreational opportunities, and manage county resources in order to meet the changing needs of the community in an effective manner.

C. Transportation and Natural Resources

Transportation and Natural Resources (TNR) is the department completing the LWTP. Its mission is to provide citizens living in unincorporated areas of the county with transportation, natural and cultural resource protection, park, and land development services to promote public safety, health, and welfare in compliance with Texas laws and mandates of the Travis County Commissioners Court. TNR is completing the LWTP to facilitate more comprehensive decision-making across its different programs and leverage program resources so departmental services are delivered in the most cost-effective way. The specific TNR functions addressed in the LWTP are as follows:

- Planning and implementing park, land conservation, drainage, and transportation capital improvement programs
- Managing parks, land conservation, endangered species habitat, water resource protection, and hazard mitigation programs
- Regulating the subdivision of property, construction of streets and drainage in subdivisions, and development in flood plains

D. Public Engagement

The LWTP is built on existing transportation, resource protection, park, hazard mitigation, and land development plans, ordinances, and rules. The public engagement process for the LWTP, therefore, began with information received from the public when these plans and ordinances were originally developed and adopted. Additional information about public opinions was also obtained from surveys completed by other agencies in recent years (see the LWTP *Background Report*). To complete the process, a draft LWTP approved by the Commissioners Court for public review was posted on line, emailed to citizens who participated in previous planning efforts, and presented to the public in a series of open meetings held throughout the county; it also was reviewed by other governmental agencies. The final stage of the public engagement process occurred when citizens had the opportunity to share their opinions with the commissioners on the final plan that TNR staff presented to the court for their consideration.

E. Planning Horizon and Geographic Study Area

The planning horizon is 25 years and uses the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) population and growth projections for planning purposes. This is aligned with the Travis County Central Campus Master Plan 2010 timeframe as well. The geographic study area is the Extra-Territorial Jurisdictions (ETJs) of the 22 municipalities in Travis County and the unincorporated area outside these limits. It is approximately 419,000 acres, or about 656.0 square miles (see Figure 1).

F. Horizon Issues

WILDLAND FIRE MITIGATION

The recent occurrences of severe wildfires in central Texas at the urban interface with undeveloped land has increased public concern about loss of life and property damage from these events. This problem is currently being addressed by the *Joint City-County Wildland Fire Task Force* and *Community Wildfire Protection Plan* template but will need to be addressed in greater detail in the County's *Hazard Mitigation Plan*.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

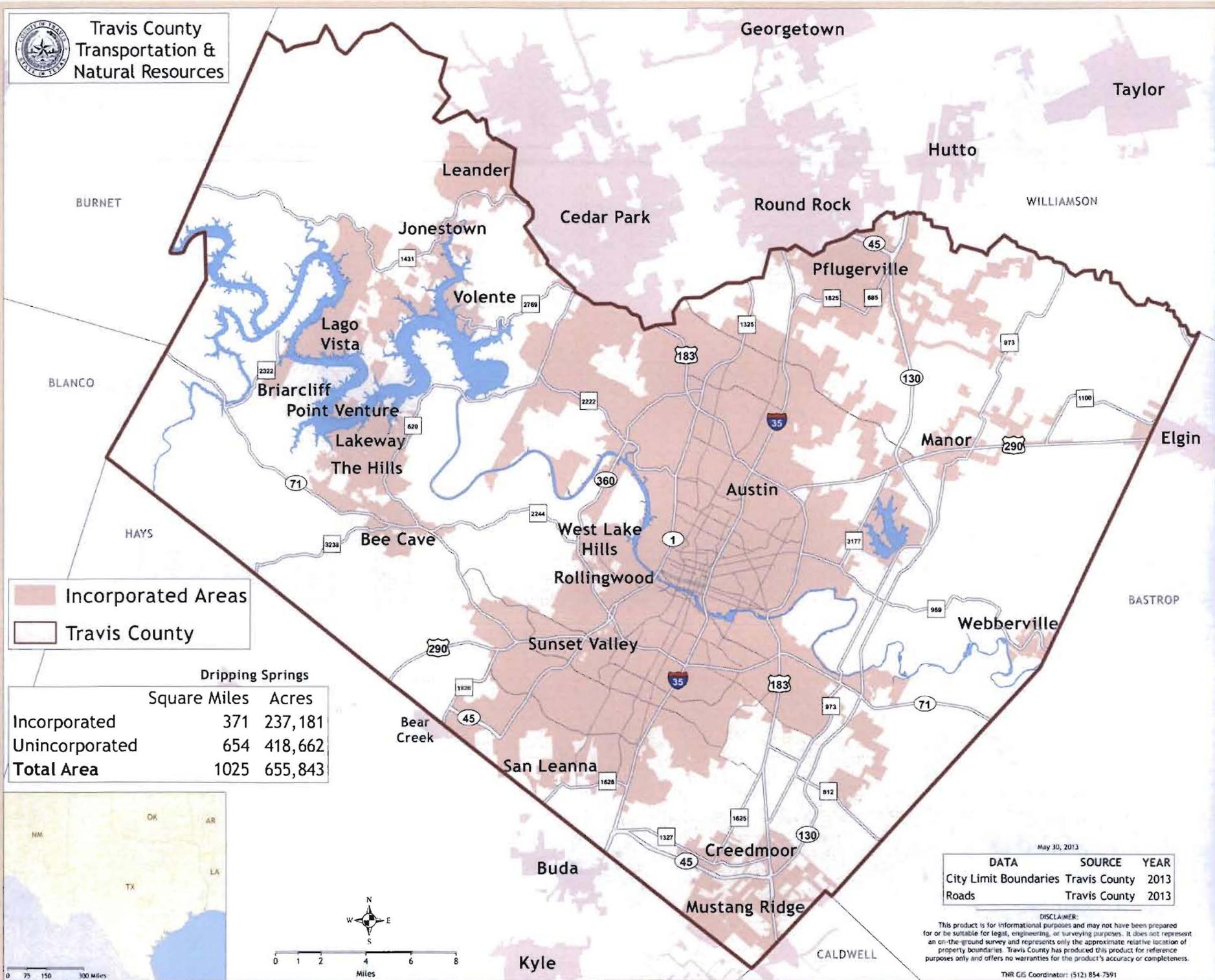
The County has historically opted to leave transit services to other providers including Capital Metro (CMTA) and Capital Area Rural Transportation System [CARTS]. However, it is apparent that the County will be sought as a partner in the development and funding of the system as the region moves forward in its effort to provide for a regional high capacity transit system. For example, in June 2012, the County was approached by Lone Star Rail (Austin-San Antonio passenger rail) to enter into an inter-local agreement with other jurisdictions to develop a tax increment finance zone to help finance the system (County Commissioners directed representatives from Lone Star Rail to return to report on how their discussions with other partners have proceeded).

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

The current federal transportation funding system has not been able to keep pace with transportation infrastructure needs especially in rapidly growing areas such as the Central Texas region. Construction costs are rising, federal and state gas taxes remain unchanged, leading to reduced spending power. In the hopes of finding more sustainable revenue sources, Travis County has sought new ways to increase local revenues to help offset property tax based funding, shifting the financing burden of larger, regional, more costly projects from public taxpayers to the users and private development that generate additional traffic.

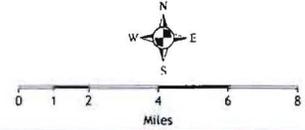


Travis County
Transportation &
Natural Resources



Incorporated Areas
 Travis County

	Dripping Springs	
	Square Miles	Acres
Incorporated	371	237,181
Unincorporated	654	418,662
Total Area	1025	655,843



May 30, 2013

DATA	SOURCE	YEAR
City Limit Boundaries	Travis County	2013
Roads	Travis County	2013

DISCLAIMER:
This product is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes. It does not represent an on-the-ground survey and represents only the approximate relative location of property boundaries. Travis County has produced this product for reference purposes only and offers no warranties for the product's accuracy or completeness.

TNR GIS Coordinator: (512) 854-7591

Travis County Incorporated Areas

PART 2: FORECASTED DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION

A. Historical and Forecasted Population Growth

TRAVIS COUNTY VS METROPOLITAN PLANNING AREA GROWTH

From 1980 to 2010, the population of Travis County grew at an average rate of 3.02% per year, from 419,573 residents in 1980 to 1,024,266 in 2010. In comparison, population of the five counties (Travis, Williamson, Hays, Bastrop and Caldwell) that make-up the region’s Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) grew at a combined average rate of 3.65% per year. This trend is expected to continue: in 2010, nearly two-thirds (60%) of the 5-county population resided in Travis County; by 2035, Travis County’s share of the 5-county population is forecasted to decline to approximately one-half (48%) of the total 5-county population (see Figure 2). See Figure 3: Travis County Future Growth for projected population within the unincorporated area of the County.

Figure 2: Historical Population and Forecast by County

County	1980 Census	1990 Census	2000 Census	2010 Census	2025 Forecast	2035 Forecast
Travis	419,573	576,407	812,280	1,024,266	1,318,000	1,555,300
Williamson	76,521	139,551	249,967	422,679	702,700	1,026,500
Hays	40,594	65,614	97,589	157,107	271,600	371,200
Bastrop	24,726	38,263	57,733	74,171	149,200	215,500
Caldwell	23,637	26,392	32,194	38,066	65,300	82,100
5-County Total	585,501	846,227	1,249,763	1,716,289	2,506,800	3,250,600

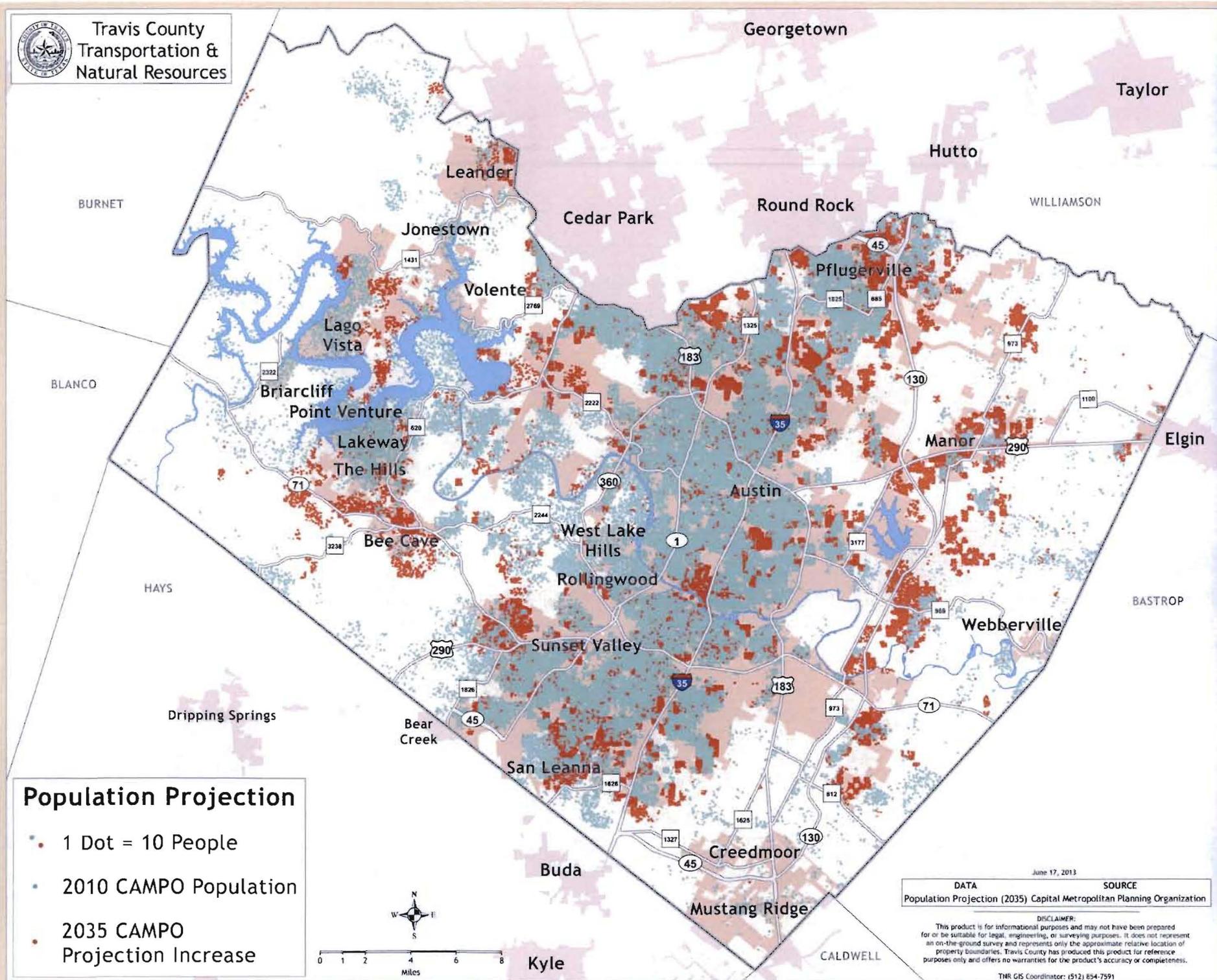
Source: CAMPO 2035 Regional Transportation Plan, June 2010.

INCORPORATED VS UNINCORPORATED GROWTH

Between 1980 and 2010, much of the new population in the region located in low density single family housing on the fringe of existing urban areas, and much of it occurred outside municipal boundaries. An additional 53,000 persons are living in unincorporated Travis County (see Figure 4) since 2000. The percentage of the total county population living in unincorporated Travis County has increased as well, growing from 15.4% in 2000 to 17.5% in 2010.

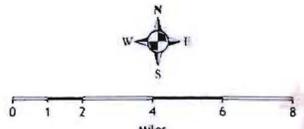


Travis County
Transportation &
Natural Resources



Population Projection

- 1 Dot = 10 People
- 2010 CAMPO Population
- 2035 CAMPO Projection Increase



June 17, 2013

DATA	SOURCE
Population Projection (2035)	Capital Metropolitan Planning Organization

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TNR GIS Coordinator: (512) 854-7591

Travis County Future Growth

Figure 4: Travis County Incorporated vs. Unincorporated Population (2000 and 2010)

Travis County	2000 Census	% of County Total	2010 Census	% of County Total
Incorporated	687,062	84.6%	845,371	82.5%
Unincorporated	125,218	15.4%	178,895	17.5%
Total	812,280		1,024,266	

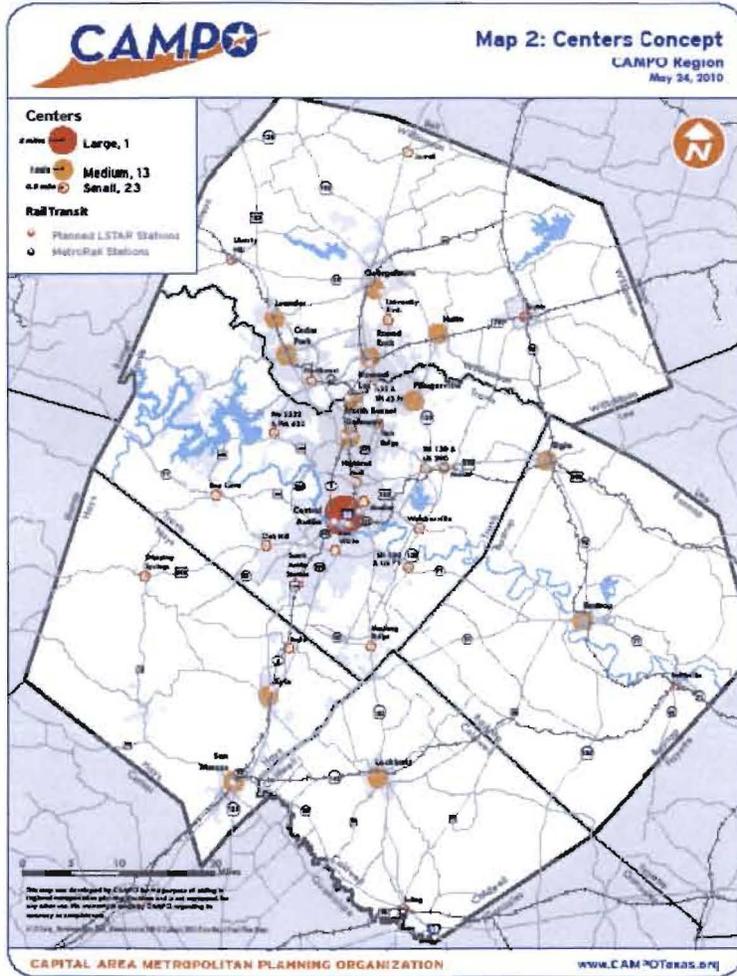
Source: 2000 and 2010 US Census.

B. Forecasted Distribution of Population

ALLOCATION OF FORECASTED POPULATION

CAMPO Centers Concept- As part of the demographic forecast prepared by the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO), a Centers Growth Concept scenario was developed to guide where future population would be allocated. The Centers Growth Concept is the implementation of a network of high density mixed use centers oriented around transportation investments included in the CAMPO long range transportation plan. In Travis County, there are currently 18 centers located mainly at the intersections of existing and/or future planned transportation systems which include rail, transit and roadway improvements. Currently, CAMPO staff and local jurisdictional planning staff are working to refine the Center’s map geography in preparation for development of the CAMPO 2040 transportation plan. Refinement to the plan will allow for a better alignment with local land use plans and approved development plans within the region. While current forecast data is representative of Center’s geography in the CAMPO 2035 Regional Transportation Plan, this data will be updated as the region refines the that geography (see Figure 3).

By implementing the Center’s concept, Travis County expects to direct its transportation investments and other incentives to target new growth and encourage development of a connected regional network of dense, mixed use centers that provide the ability to improve the region’s quality of life. Currently, Webberville is the only center located completely within the unincorporated area of Travis County. Six centers, (Pflugerville, SH 130 and US 290, Manor, Webberville, SH 130 and SH 71, and Mustang Ridge) are located along the SH 130 corridor. Another six centers are located in the I-35 corridor (Ben White, Central Austin, Mueller, Highland Mall, Tech Ridge and I-35 and SH 45 N. The population target ranges for medium centers range from 9,000 – 75,000 persons; the range for small centers is 1,000 – 10,000 persons.



MAP TO BE UPDATED

PART 3: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

A. Land Conversion Analysis

The region continues to see high growth rates and long-term forecasts of continued growth in residential housing and employment that will require areas within unincorporated Travis County to be developed. Some areas of the County will develop at faster rates and will be looked at to accommodate the region's new growth. An analysis of how much developable land in the unincorporated area is available is provided below. Population forecasts for the next 25 years and the associated land development requirements to support that growth and current land supply data suggest that the unincorporated area will have more than enough developable land to accommodate the expected growth.

Two different Scenarios were examined to see if there were limitations to the amount of developable land required to accommodate growth in the unincorporated areas of Travis County. Scenario 1 examined the developable acreage remaining if all prioritized land identified in the GreenPrint for Growth was preserved. Scenario 2 looked further and examined the amount of developable land remaining if prime farmland was also conserved in addition to the prioritized lands identified in the GreenPrint for Growth. A third Scenario that included water conservation priority lands was not evaluated and will be finalized in the next draft.

Land requirements to support the population increase from 2012 were calculated for a forecasted 2035 population. To determine the amount of land needed, first an analysis of the land requirements to support the existing 2012 population was performed (see Figure 6). The analysis uses Travis County Appraisal District (TCAD) data to identify current land use acreage in the unincorporated areas of the County. From this data, five land use categories (residential, commercial, industrial, civic, and unclassified) were selected that provide a representation of which parcels are considered developed land. For 2012, it is estimated that 104,846 acres are developed within the unincorporated areas. This equates to approximately .59 acres per person. With an additional 111,706 persons forecasted to reside within the unincorporated area and the acreage requirement for that growth at .59 acres per person, an additional 65,468 acres will be required to accommodate this population growth.

Figure 6: Land Requirement to Accommodate Population Growth to 2035

Land Use 2012 (Unincorporated Area)	Unincorporated Acreage 2012	Acreage/ Person 2012	Additional Acreage Required for Pop Increase to 2035	
Residential	73,883	0.41	46,134	
Commercial	16,155	0.09	10,088	
Industrial	478	0.003	298	
Civic	10,196	0.06	6,367	
Unclassified	<u>4,134</u>	<u>0.02</u>	<u>2,581</u>	
Total Developed Area	104,846	0.59	65,468	
2010 Unincorporated Population:				178,895
2035 Forecasted Unincorporated Population:				290,601
Additional Unincorporated Population (2010 – 2035):				111,706

Translating the growth forecasts into demand for land requires assumptions regarding the future density of new developments. Using this type analysis produced a worst case scenario since it would extrapolate a trends based Scenario that is characterized by densities developed from an auto dependent population. It is hoped that the density at which future land is developed will be influenced by policies within this plan which allow more dense development that protects the region’s natural resources.

An analysis of available land for development was completed for the two Scenarios. In Scenario 1, GreenPrint lands that were identified as high priority to be preserved were identified as not to be developed. Within the unincorporated area, 179,840 acres were identified as being developable, meaning land that had no priority for preservation. After removing the amount of acreage required to accommodate the new growth, approximately 114,000 acres remain or 64% of the estimated 2012 unincorporated developable (unprioritized) acreage (see Figure 7).

Scenario 2 provides a more aggressive preservation scenario that includes the GreenPrint high priority lands as well as the Prime Agriculture lands. Within the unincorporated area, 118,400 acres were identified as being developable. After removing the amount of acreage required to accommodate the new growth, approximately 53,000 acres remain or 45% of the estimated 2012 unincorporated developable (unprioritized) acreage.

Figure 7: Unincorporated Developable Land (Unprioritized) Acreage

	Unincorporated Developable (Unprioritized) Acres 2012	Acreage Required to Accommodate Population Growth to 2035	Unincorporated Developable (Unprioritized) Acreage Remaining 2035	% of Developable (Unprioritized) Acres Remaining after 2035
Scenario 1 - GreenPrint	179,840	65,468	114,372	64%
Scenario 2 – GreenPrint with Prime Agricultural Lands	118,400	65,468	52,932	45%

During the next 25 years, population forecasts and current land supply data suggest that the unincorporated area will have more than enough developable land to accommodate expected growth. It was estimated that new development will require approximately 66,000 acres, which will vary depending on how densely developers build and the implementation of the Centers Growth concept. Developable (unprioritized) land in the unincorporated area totaled between 118,000 to 180,000 acres, depending on the Scenario. The development requirements for the next 25 years result in a surplus of developable land that can adequately accommodate the expected growth to 2035.

B. Existing and Future Development

Identifying opportunities and constraints in existing and future development will help determine where growth is occurring and is expected to occur in the future. Within Travis County, the following development identifiers help focus where lands are susceptible to be developed or may become developed within the planning horizon. The Existing and Future Development Map is comprised of the following development identifiers, see Figure 8: Existing and Emerging Development.

- Final and Preliminary Plat Subdivisions
- Vacant Platted Lot Inventory
- Emerging Projects
- CAMPO Centers
- Growth Along County Boundaries

Final and Preliminary Plat Subdivisions: An indicator of where growth will occur is provided through land parcel status in the land development process. Locations of preliminary platted subdivisions, undeveloped platted subdivisions and existing platted subdivisions with vacant lots reveal areas that could more easily receive growth than areas that would need to begin the land development process.

- Directing growth to areas that have existing infrastructure requires less infrastructure investment.
- Northeastern Travis County, much of the preliminary platting is found east of SH 130 abutting the incorporated limits of the City of Pflugerville.
- Southeastern Travis County, large subdivisions that were platted before the 1900's that have large lots that could be re-subdivided.
- Southwestern Travis County, large preliminary plans exist along SH 71 W.
- Western Travis County has more vacant lots in final platted subdivisions than in eastern Travis County. While housing costs may be a large factor in this result, these areas may be more available to new housing starts as the economy rebounds.
- Far Northwestern Travis County shows little subdivision activity. Most activity in the unincorporated area has occurred along FM 1431 in Jonestown.

Emerging Projects

Emerging projects reveal the beginnings of plans and agreements between developers and local jurisdictions on proposed developments. These type projects usually are more long term, potentially mixed use and are larger scale than normal single family developments.

- Most emerging projects are occurring along the SH 130 corridor and along planned corridors that have proposed public private partnerships.
- Large area of emerging projects identified along SH 130 between US 290 East and FM 969.
- Emerging Projects in southeastern Travis County are adjacent to City of Austin limits except for Southeast Travis County MUDs along Pearce Lane.
- Emerging projects in western Travis County are smaller in size and development intensity.

NORTHEAST QUADRANT

Pflugerville to US 290 E: New growth will be occurring in the City of Pflugerville and its ETJ. This area is expected to see continued growth especially to the east of its incorporated area. Much of this future growth is characterized by single family preliminary plats adjacent to existing residential development in eastern Pflugerville. Current preliminary plats show approximately 3,000 residential

units slated for development. Further east, there are large areas of mainly agricultural land that do not show potential for new development to occur and have no emerging projects. These are located mainly northeast of the City of Pflugerville and to some extent east of the SH 130 corridor. South of Pflugerville and west of SH 130, existing large residential developments (Pioneer Crossing and Harris Branch) continue to be developed. Newer residential developments (Cantarra, Entrada and Fossil Creek) have begun and will provide approximately 3,000 residential units at buildout. Just to the east and north of US 290 E, Shadow Glen, a mixed use development will provide another 3,000 units at buildout.

SH 130: Large, mixed use tracts that include single and multi-family residential uses are being planned that access this new transportation corridor that runs mostly in the unincorporated area of the County. South of US 290 East to the Colorado River along the SH 130 corridor is identified as a major future growth area in the next 25 years. The 2,047 acre Whisper Valley PUD is expected to include 4,737 single family homes; 1,451 multi-family units; 231,070 sq. ft. of office space and 429,130 sq.ft. of retail space. Wild Horse PUD, bisected by SH 130 expects to develop over 5,800 residential units and non-residential development that will occupy 6.3 million sq. ft. Additionally, single family residential developments (Eastwood and Wolf Subdivisions) will create just over 3,000 new single family residential units. Another area along Decker Lake Road will see 1,700 single family units and over 1,500 multifamily units developed at the Indian Hills, Lariat B Ranch and Gilbert Lane Subdivisions. In total, approximately 15,200 new single family residential units will be provided in this area.

South of FM 969, the proposed Rio de Vida MUD is shown as a future town center in the City of Austin's comprehensive plan, Imagine Austin. The development currently has no MUD agreement with the City of Austin; however, plans to develop over 8,000 single and multi-family units with commercial and retail uses continue.

SOUTHEAST QUADRANT

Another area of high growth is planned to occur in southeastern Travis County just west of SH 130 along the extensions of Slaughter Lane and William Cannon Drive. Two large mixed-use developments, Goodnight Ranch (Slaughter Lane and Thaxton Road) and Pilot Knob MUD (along future Slaughter Lane and William Cannon Drive west of US 183 S) have just over 19,500 residential units planned.

Additionally, further to the east of SH 130 is the new Formula One (F1) site. While, the project was not included in the current population forecast, the impact on the surrounding area will be dramatic especially in the potential for new job growth. Northeast of the F1 site is another MUD development. Southeast Travis County MUDs propose nearly 4,000 units of single and multifamily residential and additional retail space. Another proposed high growth area lies at the intersection of IH 35 S and SH 45 SE. Sunfield development along the Hays County line is proposing the development of a master planned community of single and multi-family, commercial and light industrial land uses. Also, the City of Austin has identified the area surrounding the intersection as a Regional Center in its Imagine Austin Plan.

A large area of southeast Travis County is shown as final platted and with a majority of those lots developed. However, this was an early plat of large lots. While these lots are shown to be developed, it is possible that new development could occur in his area with the acquisition of lots and a re-subdivision of the properties.

SOUTHWEST QUADRANT

In southwest Travis County, large amounts of land are held as preserve lands and water quality protection lands. These acquisitions have lessened the potential acreage for future development. Areas that are forecasted to see growth in the next 25 years include, the Village of Bee Cave located at RM 620 and SH 71 W along the SH 71 West highway corridor. Just west of Bee Cave, nearly 3,600 residential units are planned at Sweetwater Ranch, Lazy Nine MUD and West Cypress Hills; all take access off of SH 71W. While not a defined center, the City of Lakeway will grow along its southern boundary, west of the new medical center, and along Bee Creek Road. Additionally, at Lake Travis along Bee Creek Road, Vizcaya subdivision is planned for 275 residential lots.

NORTHWEST QUADRANT

A large portion of northwest Travis County is part of the Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife refuge. As with southwest Travis County, a large amount of acreage is in preserve and water quality protection lands. Limits to infrastructure and opportunities to develop outside endangered species habitat reduce this quadrant as a high growth area for the future. The cities of Jonestown and Lago Vista show continued growth north of Lake Travis.

CAMPO Centers

The CAMPO Center concept is designed to direct future growth to areas with adequate public facilities including new development alternatives and compact mixed use centers that provide alternative transportation modes making it easier to live work and play. By directing the growth trend from traditional subdivision development to a “centers” type concept, more opportunities become available to provide for parkland, greenways, conservation of prime farmland and allow for sustainable water sources. Locations of existing and proposed centers provide opportunities to evaluate connections between centers and needs for supporting infrastructure.

- Many of existing CAMPO Centers have proposed emerging projects.
- Predominant center locations are in the along SH 130 and proposed transportation corridors.
- City of Austin identified neighborhood centers along northern city limits along proposed corridors.
- Opportunities exist to expand and connect centers in the unincorporated area along transportation corridors.
- Western Travis County has limited center development, connectivity will be problematic.

Growth on County Boundaries

Significant growth will also occur just outside the County's boundary. In northern Travis County, a medium center (Robinson Ranch) is located west of Burnet Road along SH 45 and will include 10,000 new residential units. In southern Travis County, growth will continue in the Buda and Kyle areas and new development is planned along I-35 at Estancia and the old Heap Ranch.

C. Land Conservation Priorities

Approximately 60,000 acres, or 14% of unincorporated Travis County, has been conserved as parks, preserves, or conservation easements by Travis County, the State of Texas, Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA), and the City of Austin. Most of this land has been conserved to protect endangered species habitat and because this type of habitat is found exclusively west of the Balcones Escarpment, more land has been conserved in western Travis County than eastern: approximately one-quarter of western Travis County is conserved while approximately 2% of eastern Travis County is conserved (see Figure 9 below).

Figure 9: Land Conserved in Unincorporated Travis County

UNINCORPORATED TRAVIS COUNTY		LAND CONSERVED BY TRAVIS COUNTY					LAND CONSERVED BY OTHERS (USFW, State, LCRA, Municipalities)					TOTAL CONSERVED LAND	
Area	Acres	Park Acres	Preserve Acres	CE Acres	Total Acres	Land Area Conserved	Park Acres	Preserve Acres	CE Acres	Total Acres	Land Area Conserved	Acres	Land Area Conserved
NE	122,333	1,607	0	531	2,139	1.7%	132	0	0	132	0.1%	2,271	1.9%
SE	62,970	1,107	0	0	1,107	1.8%	16	0	0	16	0.0%	1,123	1.8%
SW	127,912	3,532	403	0	3,935	3.1%	2,663	18,875	0	21,538	16.8%	25,473	19.9%
NW	105,446	203	5,346	0	5,549	5.3%	3,789	20,430	0	24,219	23.0%	29,767	28.2%
TOTAL	418,662	6,450	5,749	531	12,729	3.0%	6,600	39,305	0	45,905	11.0%	58,635	14.0%

Note 1: "LAND CONSERVED BY TRAVIS COUNTY" includes Travis County-owned land that either a) is in unincorporated Travis County, b) has at least 15% of its area in unincorporated Travis County, or c) is adjacent to county-owned land in unincorporated Travis County.

Note 2: Northeast (NE), southeast (SE), southwest (SW), and northwest (NW) geographic areas are defined east-west by IH 35 and north-south by the centerline of the Colorado River.

Note 3: Balcones Canyonland Preserve or City of Austin water quality protection conservation easements are included in the "Preserve Acres" category. Other types of conservation easements are included in the "CE Acres" category.

TRAVIS COUNTY’S ROLE

The County plays a significant role in conserving land in unincorporated Travis County: it has conserved approximately one-half of all parkland in the area; it contributes to the preserve inventory as a holder of Balcones Canyonland Preserve (BCP) land; and it is the only entity executing conservation easements on non-BCP or Water Quality Protection lands (See Figure 10).

Figure 10: Travis County’s Role in Conserving Land

PROVIDER	PARKS		PRESERVES		CONSERVATION EASEMENTS		TOTAL	
	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent
Travis County	6,450	49%	6,600	14%	531	100%	13,581	23%
Other	6,600	51%	39,305	86%	0	0%	45,905	77%
Total	13,050	100%	45,905	100%	531	100%	59,486	100%

LAND CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

The LWTP land conservation priorities are based on priorities established in other plans¹ to protect floodplains and riparian areas, prime farmland, the Pedernales River corridor, and endangered species habitat and karst zones (see Figure 11).

Floodplain and Riparian Areas

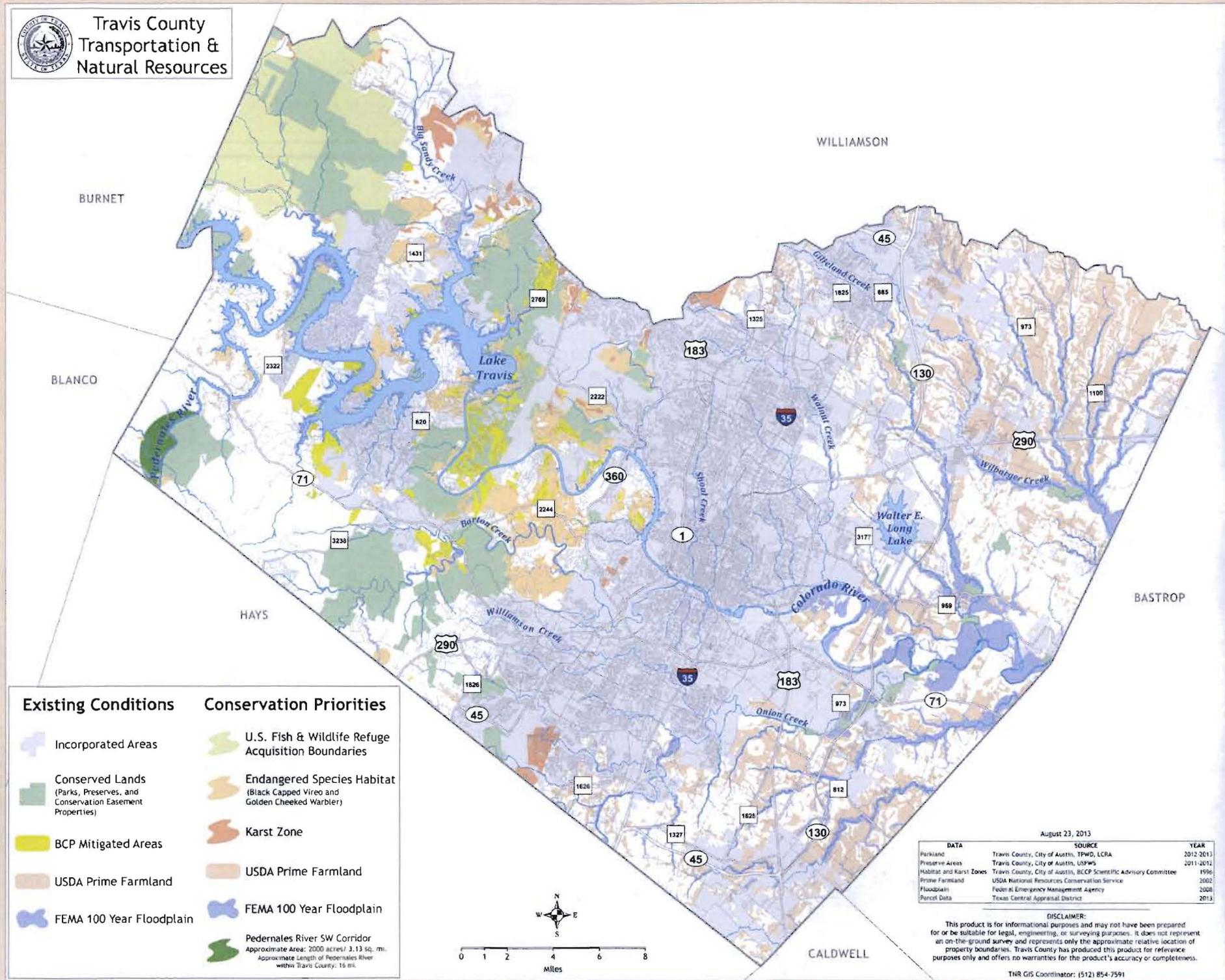
Almost all floodplain and riparian areas are found in eastern Travis County along the Colorado River and its tributaries. Conserving these floodplains and riparian areas are high priorities in the *Parks Master Plan*, *The Travis County Greenprint for Growth (Greenprint)*, and *Colorado River Corridor Plan (CRCP)* for several reasons:

- They are the foundation of a linear park system that will provide the growing SH 130 population opportunities to recreate outdoors and enjoy nature close to home.
- Protected, or restored, bottomland forests, grasslands, and wetland ecosystems provide natural benefits including mitigating storm water damage, maximizing groundwater recharge, and attenuating polluted runoff.
- The Colorado River Alluvial Aquifer is a locally important ground water supply.
- Incidents of incompatible land use between neighborhoods and aggregate mining operations are reduced.
- Property values of adjacent residences are positively impacted.

¹“Other plans” are “Travis County Parks and Natural Areas Master Plan” (Parks Master Plan), “The Travis County Greenprint for Growth” (Greenprint), “Conservation Subdivision Ordinance”, “Colorado River Corridor Plan” (CRCP), “Balcones Canyonland Preserve Plan” (BCCP), “Southwest Growth Dialogue” (SWGDL), and “Balcones Canyonland National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan” (BCNWR CCP)



Travis County
Transportation &
Natural Resources



Existing Conditions

- Incorporated Areas
- Conserved Lands (Parks, Preserves, and Conservation Easement Properties)
- BCP Mitigated Areas
- USDA Prime Farmland
- FEMA 100 Year Floodplain

Conservation Priorities

- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Refuge Acquisition Boundaries
- Endangered Species Habitat (Black Capped Vireo and Golden Cheeked Warbler)
- Karst Zone
- USDA Prime Farmland
- FEMA 100 Year Floodplain
- Pedernales River SW Corridor
Approximate Area: 2000 acres/ 3.13 sq. mi.
Approximate Length of Pedernales River within Travis County: 19 mi.



August 23, 2013

DATA	SOURCE	YEAR
Parkland	Travis County, City of Austin, TPWD, LCRA	2012-2013
Preserve Areas	Travis County, City of Austin, USFWS	2011-2012
Habitat and Karst Zones	Travis County, City of Austin, BCCP Scientific Advisory Committee	1996
Prime Farmland	USDA National Resources Conservation Service	2002
Floodplains	Federal Emergency Management Agency	2008
Parcel Data	Texas Central Appraisal District	2013

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TNR GIS Coordinator: (512) 854-7591

Land Conservation Priorities

USDA Prime Farmland

Almost all prime farmland is found in eastern Travis County. It is land that the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines as having the combination of soil properties, growing season, and moisture supply to produce sustained, high yields of food, forage, and fiber crops if managed according to acceptable farming methods. It is valued for its rural character and agricultural productivity. Its conservation is a priority in the *Parks Master Plan*, *Conservation Subdivision Ordinance*, and *CRCP*.

Pedernales River Corridor

The Pedernales River is a major natural and recreational resource in southwest Travis County. Conserving land along its length to protect the river's scenic Hill Country landscape, the unique recreational opportunities it offers, and quality of water that flows into Lake Travis is a high priority in the *Parks Master Plan*. Conserving land in this part of the county is also a major goal of the *Southwest Travis County Growth Dialogue (SWTCGD)*.

Endangered Species Habitat and Karst Zones

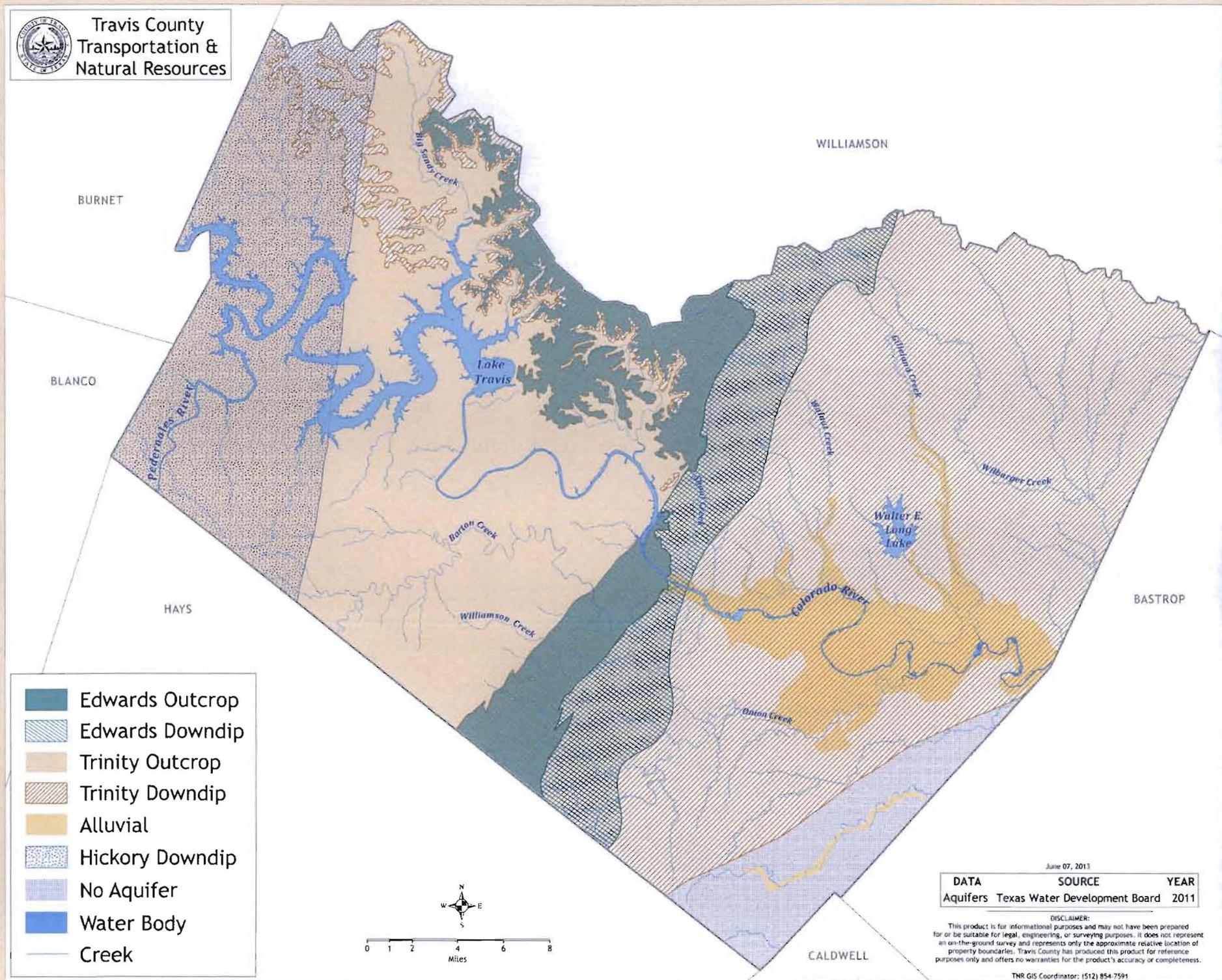
Endangered species habitat is found in western Travis County. Although much of this land is protected in the BCP and the *US Fish and Wildlife Refuge (USFWR)* additional land is required to complete both. Approximately 1600 to 1800 additional acres are required to complete the BCP minimum acreage requirements and 800 to 900 acres are required to complete configuration requirements of the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFW)10(a)1(B) Permit, which was issued by USFW, upon completion of the Habitat Conservation Plan (required by the Endangered Species Act [ESA]), to help facilitate the continuation of development projects in the region. As of ____, the minimum acreage requirement is approximately 453 acres of habitat for the Warbler and Vireo and 355 acres for 17 karst features for protection of cave dwelling species. The purpose of the configuration requirement is to close gaps between existing preserve lands. As shown on the map below, USFWS has established acquisition boundaries for completing the USFWR. Although not evident in the Land Conservation Priorities map -- because a large part of the endangered species habit has already been conserved -- the Green Print designated endangered species habitat as a high conservation priority.

C. Water Conservation Priorities

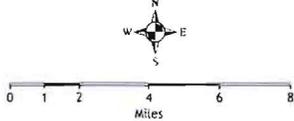
Unincorporated regions of Travis County have important surface and ground water resources that need to be protected for domestic, agricultural, recreational, commercial, and industrial uses (see Figure 12). Surface water resources include Lake Travis, the Colorado River, the Pedernales River, and many creeks. Groundwater resources include the Edwards Aquifer, Trinity Aquifer, and Colorado River Alluvial Aquifer. Recharge features such as the Trinity and Edwards outcrop regions also need to be protected to ensure the health of our future water supply.



Travis County
Transportation &
Natural Resources



- Edwards Outcrop
- Edwards Dondip
- Trinity Outcrop
- Trinity Dondip
- Alluvial
- Hickory Dondip
- No Aquifer
- Water Body
- Creek



DATA	SOURCE	YEAR
Aquifers	Texas Water Development Board	2011

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Water Conservation Priorities

LAKE TRAVIS AND TRIBUTARIES

Lake Travis is formed by the impoundment of the Colorado River at Mansfield Dam and is the most significant reservoir on the river because of its tremendous water storage capacity. It is a primary source of fresh water for communities and major industries throughout Travis County and helps drive the area's strong economy and population growth. It also is a major recreational resource that is estimated to generate, when full, approximately \$200 million in revenue for state and local governments². The Pedernales River is the largest tributary in Travis County. Bee Creek, Cow Creek, Cypress Creek, Hurst Creek, and Sandy Creek also feed the lake. As recently as April 2013 in its *Current Water Quality Report*, the LCRA rated both Lake Travis and the Pedernales River as having "excellent" water.

COLORADO RIVER AND TRIBUTARIES

The Colorado River provides water for local residential, agricultural, and commercial uses but it's also a source of water for the City of Pflugerville and nearby communities in the northern part of the county. Major tributaries are Onion Creek, with a watershed of approximately 343 square miles, and Gilleland Creek. The water quality of the Colorado River at Austin was rated "fair" in the LCRA's April 2013 *Current Water Quality Report*.

EDWARDS OUTCROP

The Edwards Outcrop is an environmentally important recharge zone allowing fresh water to replenish the Edwards Aquifer. Much of it is located within incorporated parts of the county, however, so Travis County has limited responsibility for its protection.

TRINITY OUTCROP

The Trinity Outcrop west of the Edwards Outcrop allows fresh water to percolate downward and is the main source of well-water for both public and private users in unincorporated western Travis County. Its supply is threatened, however, by increased consumption by a growing population and limited recharge of its supply as multi-year droughts continue.

COLORADO RIVER ALLUVIAL AQUIFER

The Colorado River Alluvium is the only fresh groundwater supply east of the Edwards artesian zone in eastern Travis County. It is a locally important public and private well-water supply but its small size and limited capacity cannot support growth in that area. The quality of its water is already degraded in some locations due to elevated nitrate levels and is further threatened by polluted runoff from agriculture and aggregate mining operations.

² Robert Charles Lesser & Co. 2011. *Lake Travis Economic Impact Report*.

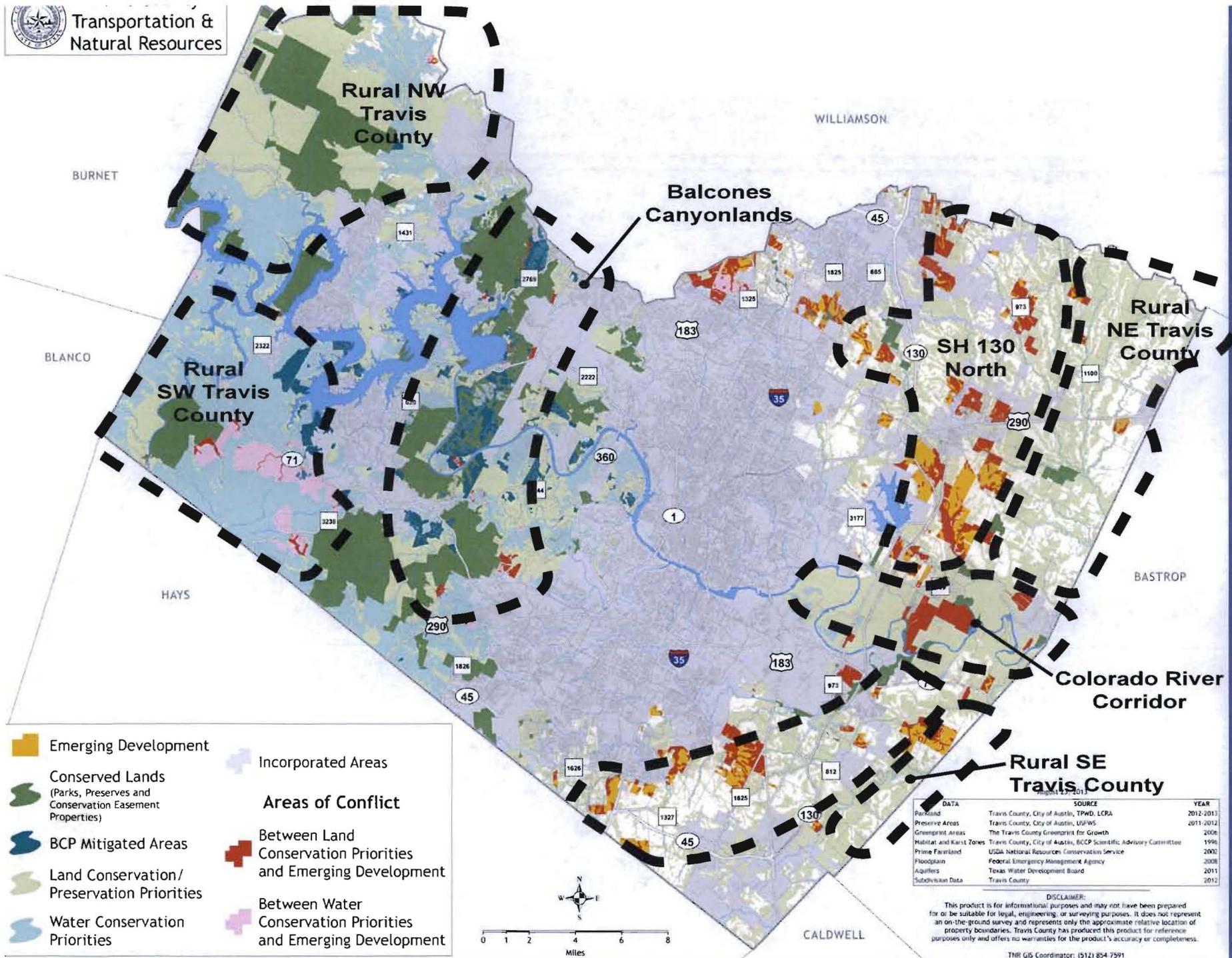
E. Opportunities and Challenges

Unincorporated Travis County can be divided into areas that have similar development patterns and land and water resource characteristics and, subsequently, similar types of conflicts between emerging development and conservation priorities. As such, these areas provide a framework for examining opportunities and challenges relative to a specific geographic areas. The “hot spots” illustrated in Figure 13 below were identified by overlaying the Existing and New Development, the Land Conservation Priorities, and Water Conservation Priorities maps discussed above. The specific areas discussed in this section are as follows:

- SH 130 North Growth Corridor
- SH 130/SH 45SE Growth Corridor
- Rural Northeast Travis County
- Colorado River Corridor
- Rural Southeast Travis County
- Rural Southwest Travis County
- Rural Northwest Travis County
- Balcones Canyonlands

SH 130 NORTH GROWTH CORRIDOR

The SH 130 North Growth Corridor is a crescent-shaped area that roughly follows the alignment of SH 130 north-south from Williamson County to FM 969. Most of the corridor is located within the municipal and ETJ bounds of the cities of Austin, Manor, and Pflugerville. Construction of SH 130/SH45 toll roads and the availability of developable land is spurring development in this area. Numerous single-family and multi-family subdivisions have been developed; and the number of plans for large, mixed-use developments is making this one of the potentially most concentrated areas of new growth in unincorporated Travis County. Much of the undeveloped land is prime farmland and there are extensive flood plains along Onion, Gilleland and Wilbarger creeks so development inherently conflicts with land conservation priorities. There are no significant groundwater resources to protect.



DATA	SOURCE	YEAR
Parkland	Travis County, City of Austin, TPWD, LCRA	2012-2013
Preserve Areas	Travis County, City of Austin, USFWS	2011-2012
Greenprint Areas	The Travis County Greenprint for Growth	2006
Habitat and Karst Zones	Travis County, City of Austin, BCCP Scientific Advisory Committee	1996
Prime Farmland	USDA National Resources Conservation Service	2002
Floodplain	Federal Emergency Management Agency	2008
Aquifers	Texas Water Development Board	2011
Subdivision Data	Travis County	2012

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THR GIS Coordinator: (512) 854-7591

Infrastructure Finance: The city of Austin views the corridor as a suitable place for dense, mixed-use development in their ETJ. However, much of the area requires infrastructure investments to support the intensity of the development proposed. In 2006, the City of Austin completed a study looking at the creation of an infrastructure district to fund needed water transmission lines, major wastewater collection lines, arterial roadway improvements and regional drainage facilities along the corridor. The study, however, found that the costs of the required infrastructure exceeded the district's forecasted revenues, requiring the city to finance the difference. Because the city was unwilling to take on this debt, a district was not established, and large scale infrastructure investments have not been made. While the city was unwilling to assume debt to build the infrastructure required for mixed-use development, improvements are being financed through other means: Municipal Utility Districts (MUDs), Public Improvement Districts (PIDs), and partnerships to an extent not seen elsewhere in unincorporated Travis County.

Arterial Roadway Improvements: Travis County and City of Austin have been investing in arterial roadway infrastructure to facilitate mobility within the corridor. Improvements are planned or already completed for Pecan Street, Howard Lane, Wells Branch Parkway, Parmer Lane, Braker Lane, and Decker Lake Road to improve connections to SH 130 and movement within the corridor. Additionally, the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA) is completing toll improvements to US 290 E from US 183 to the east of Parmer Lane. Once completed, the Manor Expressway will be a 6.2-mile limited-access toll road with three lanes in each direction. The existing US 290 E will be widened and will remain non-tolled. As these new improvements provide for more mobility, it is expected that development will occur along these arterials as other types of infrastructure are provided.

Gilleland Creek Greenways: Travis County is conserving flood plain by acquiring parkland along Gilleland Creek as part of its greenway initiative. Land is being obtained primarily through fee-simple purchase but some is obtained as parkland dedications through the development process. The only farmland that is being conserved in the corridor is that which is acquired incidentally for the Onion Creek and Gilleland Creek greenways. Prime farmland outside of flood plains is in fact highly suitable for building and attracts development.

SH130/45SE SOUTHEAST GROWTH CORRIDOR

The SH 130/45SE Southeast Growth Corridor is separated from the northern crescent by the Colorado River Corridor. As with the northern corridor, the Southeast Growth Corridor follows along SH 130 and includes SH 45 SE. Most of the corridor is located within the municipal and ETJ bounds of the cities of Austin, Mustang Ridge and Creedmoor. This portion of the crescent has not witnessed as much new development as has been proposed to the north, but with the location of the Circuit of the Americas track and the

availability of more land without conservation potential, it is expected that this area will begin to see development proposals at the level of the northern corridor.

Arterial Roadway Improvements: In the past, Travis County has invested in roadway infrastructure to make connections to SH 130 through improvements to Slaughter Lane, William Cannon Drive and Elroy Road. Currently, opportunities to improve connectivity around the Circuit of the Americas site are being evaluated in expectation of future growth.

Onion Creek Greenway: Travis County is conserving flood plain by acquiring parkland along Onion Creek as part of its greenway initiative. Land is being obtained primarily through fee-simple purchase but some is obtained as parkland dedications through the development process. The only farmland that is being conserved in the corridor is that which is acquired incidentally for the Onion Creek and Gilleland Creek greenways. Prime farmland outside of flood plains is in fact highly suitable for building and attracts development.

RURAL NORTHEAST TRAVIS COUNTY

Rural Northeast Travis County is a linear area extending from Williamson County to the Colorado River Corridor area, bounded by the SH130 North Growth Corridor to the west and Bastrop County line to the east. A small portion is within the City of Elgin but it is mostly unincorporated. It has a network of two-lane county roads serving rural areas. It has flood plain and the largest area of prime farmland in Travis County. There is little development forecasted for this area so conflicts with conservation priorities are not imminent. There are no significant groundwater resources to protect.

Infrastructure Needs: As the cities of Elgin, Manor and Pflugerville grow, utilities will become more available and development can be expected to expand into the area. However, this growth is expected to be much slower than that occurring in both the northern and southern SH 130 growth corridors.

Conservation Easements: Land is currently being conserved through the county's land conservation easement program. Approximately ____ acres has been conserved on Wilbarger Creek in recent years in partnership with landowners and the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS). Much of the conserved land is prime farmland.

COLORADO RIVER CORRIDOR

The Colorado River Corridor extends from the eastern limit of incorporated City of Austin to the Bastrop County line. Its northern and southern boundaries follow the approximate limits of the river's 100-year flood plain. Most of it lies within the ETJs of the cities of Austin and Webberville. It has prime farmland, the largest area of floodplain in the county, and important surface and ground water resources – the Colorado River and the Colorado River Alluvial Aquifer. The most immediate, and long term, impact of growth is the loss of prime farmland and flood plain to sand and gravel excavation. This is an historic use that will continue, on a large scale, over the next few decades.

Incompatible Land Use: Spurred on by the recent permitting of large tracts of land for mining, residents lobbied the county to address their concerns about the impact of mining operations on their quality of life: they expect dust, noise, impairment of water resources, loss of agricultural lands and rural character, and negative impacts on their property values to worsen as mining operations expand. The county's limited authority, however, to enforce land use regulations restricts the type of actions the county can take to protect landowners. In this particular case, the county undertook several actions to mitigate the impacts of incompatible land uses occurring side-by-side: 1) they executed the Agreement for the Acquisition of Open Space Parkland in Lieu of Condemnation with TXI, 2) contracted services for monitoring the impact of mining on noise levels and air and water quality, and 3) contracted services to complete the Colorado River Corridor Plan (CRCP), a conceptual plan for the corridor that identifies preferred land use patterns that has growth along the major highways, large tracts of rural land preserved, and clashes of incompatible land uses minimized.

Also, residents living within Austin Colony have been actively seeking opportunities to provide for land use protection, infrastructure improvements and improvements to quality of life through annexation requests to the City of Austin and possibly through municipal incorporation of the area.

Infrastructure Development: The extent and pace of residential and mixed-use development in the corridor is dependent in large part on the availability of water and sanitary sewer infrastructure. The proposed development of Rio de Vida, a mining reuse project for mixed use municipal utility district (MUD) that would yield over 8,000 homes and apartments, demonstrates this point. In this case, a MUD was established to finance infrastructure. The City of Austin and district, however, could not reach an agreement over water and sewer rights so the district was dissolved in 2012. Although this MUD was dissolved, the developer has expressed its desire to develop the area and is exploring other opportunities.

Groundwater Supply: As noted above, the Colorado River Alluvial Aquifer is a locally important source of water. It has limited capacity, however, and its use as a water supply in new subdivisions has been prohibited by Travis County through its Water Availability Regulation adopted in 2012.

Traffic Congestion: Additional residential development has led to increased congestion and travel times within the corridor. As a response to these conditions, improvements to provide better access to the new middle school were funded in 2011 and a partnership with TXDoT to add capacity to FM 969 from FM 3177 to Austin Colony Blvd was established.

Colorado River Bridge: Construction of a bridge over the Colorado River connecting Burluson Manor Road to SH 71 E is proposed in the CAMPO 2035 plan. This major transportation improvement will provide new connectivity and mobility in areas that are currently not developed and facilitate conversion of prime farmland to other uses.

Concurrent Reclamation: There are several legacy quarries and mines in the corridor which have matured without human intervention into wildlife habitat with some wetland functions. But without the softening effects of time, traditional drag line operations close with unsightly spoil piles and unnatural land contours that are not suitable for reuse. More recent requirements for closing mines, though, dictate that post-mining landscapes have contours and elevations that approximate pre-mining landscapes. Mines are closed with agreed upon slopes, re-vegetation, and stabilization that make the post-mined land environmentally sustainable and suitable for reuse as agricultural, residential, or commercial uses.

Park Greenways and Colorado River Corridor: Travis County is conserving flood plain by acquiring parkland along Onion Creek, Gilleland Creek, and the Colorado River as part of its greenway and river corridor initiatives. Land is being obtained primarily through fee-simple purchase but some is obtained through parkland dedications from new developments including the major mining operator in the area. The only farmland that is being conserved in the corridor is that which is acquired incidentally for the greenways and river corridor.

RURAL SOUTHEAST TRAVIS COUNTY

Rural Southeast Travis County extends from the Colorado River Corridor, south to the cities of Mustang Ridge and Creedmoor. It is bounded by the SH 130/SH 45 Southeast Growth Corridor to the west and Bastrop County line to the east. It includes ETJs for the cities of Austin, Mustang Ridge, and Creedmoor. It is similar to the northeastern part of the county in that it's mostly undeveloped, and most of the undeveloped land is prime farmland or flood plain. There are no significant groundwater resources.

Infrastructure Development: The Rural Southeast Travis County corridor is similar to the Rural Northeast Travis County in that development has lagged due to limited infrastructure availability. However, the area is much closer to the incorporated limits of the City of Austin, SH 130 and is located to the east of the new Circuit of the Americas. With the proximity to SH 130 and the development of Circuit of the Americas it is expected this area may begin to see growth as infrastructure is developed.

One large area of development, the 1,600 acre Southeast Travis County MUD, is planned along Pearce Lane. The municipal utility district will be able to tax residents so that water, sewage, drainage and other infrastructure can be developed. The development will be predominately single family residential.

Land Conservation: No land has been conserved in this area.

RURAL SOUTHWEST TRAVIS COUNTY

Rural Southwest Travis County extends from the eastern edges of the cities of Lakeway and Bee Cave west to Blanco County and southwest to Hays County. Its northern boundary is Lake Travis. It is an area where development and conservation priorities – particularly water conservation priorities -- clash. It is attractive for development because it is the last area in the county that has large, contiguous tracts of undeveloped land; it also is served by the SH 71 and Hamilton Pool Road transportation corridors. Conversely, it has important ground and surface water resources: it lies over the Trinity Aquifer and has the Pedernales River and headwaters of Lake Travis and Barton Creek tributaries within its bounds.

Infrastructure Needs: The extent to which this area develops hinges on whether transportation improvements are provided and water is available to support growth. Limited water infrastructure has slowed development and road improvements have been controversial: some residents have objected to and delayed improvements to Hamilton Pool Road and the construction of the Reimers-Peacock arterial.

Water Quality Protection: In June, 2004, the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) shut down construction of a master-planned community off SH 71 in western Travis County. For nearly a year, sediment from a “problem plagued” detention pond and dam at the headwaters of the east fork of Lick Creek polluted creek water. Although primary regulatory responsibility fell to the LCRA and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), residents lobbied Travis County to help resolve the problem. The county did issue violation notices for silt-containment failures, but was stymied by limited enforcement powers. This event, however, in part,

prompted the county to strengthen its regulatory powers for protecting water quality. In 2012, the county adopted more stringent water quality protection rules as part of its development regulations.

Land Conservation: Travis County has been conserving land in this part of the county through parkland acquisition. It has assembled more than 3,000 acres on the Pedernales River, adjacent to Hamilton Pool Preserve, since 2001. Although this initiative was set in county's parks master plan, it is consistent with the recommendation made by the Southwest Travis County Growth Dialogue (SWTCGD) to conserve approximately 6000 acres in the area (SWTCGD was a forum organized by the LCRA and Travis County to facilitate a discussion about development and conservation issues in their community).

RURAL NORTHWEST TRAVIS COUNTY

Rural Northwest Travis County is bounded on its east by the cities of Leander, Jonestown, and Lago Vista, the north and west by Williamson and Burnet counties, and south by Lake Travis. Although it lies over the Trinity and Edwards aquifers, has endangered species habitat, and contains headwaters of tributaries that flow into Lake Travis, there is currently little development and no immediate conflicts between development and conservation priorities.

Infrastructure Needs: There is limited infrastructure in place to support any large scale developments. No road improvements are planned within this corridor.

Land and Water Conservation: The US Fish and Wildlife Refuge covers approximately ____ acres, and approximately ____ acres are targeted for acquisition. In addition to conserving endangered species habitat, this conserved land protects surface and groundwater resources as well.

BALCONES CANYONLAND AREA

The Balcones Canyonland area extends from northern Travis County limits to approximately the "Y" at Oak Hill. It includes incorporated areas of the cities of Austin, Bee Cave, Lakeway, Oak Hill, Volente, and West Lake. It has large tracts of protected endangered species habitat and encompasses the majority of Travis County's Balcones Canyonland Preserve system. It is distinguished from other parts of the county because it has scattered, densely developed areas abutting large areas of preserved endangered species habitat. The presence of endangered species coupled with the topographic constraints precludes new, large development occurring in this part of the county.

F. Summary

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Rapid Growth and the Unincorporated Area

The Central Texas region continues to be one of the fastest growing areas in the United States with a large amount of new growth projected to occur within the unincorporated area of the County. The current CAMPO 2035 Regional Transportation Plan forecasts approximately 525,000 additional persons will reside in Travis County by 2035. This amount of growth equals 58 new persons, per day for 25 years. The unincorporated area population, currently at 178,895, has grown since 2000, from 15.4% to 17.4% of the County's total population, even as the unincorporated areas of the county have shrunk due to municipal annexation. As a result of this growth, opportunities exist to effectively influence land use, land and water conservation and transportation decisions.

Changing Land Use Patterns

The most active growth area identified is the SH 130 North Corridor. It is expected that this forecasted growth paralleling the SH 130 corridor will cause rapid transformation in land use. Policy direction encouraging new development patterns can provide opportunities to improve the quality of life through higher density, mixed use developments oriented around transportation investments.

Leveraging Infrastructure Investment

A 2006 City of Austin infrastructure district study found the City unwilling to cover the financial difference between forecasted revenues and costs to provide needed infrastructure to the SH 130 Corridor. With the City unwilling to assume the debt, private sector investment has been leveraged with public funds to bring infrastructure to this corridor. MUDs, PIDs and public-private partnerships have filled the void especially in the SH 130 North growth corridor. Conversely, less development pressure is identified and is forecasted to continue in Rural NE Travis County and Rural NW Travis County which are areas with limited infrastructure investment and leveraging.

Adjacency Driving Development

Land conversion or "lands sensitive to change" will occur around existing infrastructure and in suburban development located along the County's boundary. Adjacency to developing infrastructure mainly within the SH 130 corridor, along the fringe of incorporated areas and increasing development along the northern County boundary (Round Rock, Cedar Park and Leander) and southern County boundary (Buda and Kyle) identify these areas of transition.

Development “Game Changer”

The impact of the Circuit of Americas track on surrounding undeveloped land will bring development pressure to an area that has lacked infrastructure investment. Infrastructure investment as well partnerships are being sought that will foster development opportunities in the SH 130/45SE corridor.

Southwest Travis County Development Challenges

Environmental constraints, such as steep slopes, rocky soils, endangered species habitat coupled with limited water and sewer infrastructure capacity has dampened development outside of incorporated areas in the Rural SW Travis County Corridor. Currently, new development has generated from previous development agreements mainly south of SH 71 West. The existence of large tracts of developable lands and the provision of transportation improvements as well as new utility connections along SH 71 West and Hamilton Pool Road will cause development pressure in one of the regions more scenic and environmentally sensitive areas of the County.

CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Build Green Perimeters

The outer limits of Travis County are minimally developed rural areas so there is an opportunity to conserve agricultural lands and natural areas in a comprehensive way before development occurs. Having green perimeters on the western and eastern sides of the county would help conserve Travis County’s rural character, provide opportunities for outdoor recreation, and mitigate the environmental impacts of denser development occurring in growth areas. These green perimeters could also connect to conserved lands in adjacent counties to maximize their benefits.

Conserve Flood Plains and Prime Farmland in Eastern Travis County

Land conservation in Travis County has been driven by protection of both endangered species habitat and Trinity Outcrop recharge areas so more land has been conserved on the west side of the county where these resources are found than on the east side. The emergence of flood plain and prime farmland as land conservation priorities, however, is support conservation in eastern Travis County. Travis County leads this trend through its initiative, implemented with bonds approved by voters in 2005 and again in 2011, to build greenways along Onion and Gilleland creeks and a corridor along the river. The county is also initiating a conservation easement program that helps protect prime farmland in eastern Travis County. With newly gained authority to execute conservation easements, strong community support, landowner interest, and voter-approved bond funding for this effort, the county has executed agreements, in partnership with US Farm and Ranchland Protection Program, to conserve privately owned properties for perpetuity.

Provide Nature Nearby

Conventional wisdom supported by individual experience and expert opinion holds that access to nature – whether strolling in a park, walking a shaded sidewalk, driving a scenic road, or hiking the back country – enhances a person’s physical and mental wellbeing. The challenge, then, as the county develops, is to ensure residents can easily and safely enjoy nature in their daily life. This is particularly critical in the SH 130 corridor that is growing so rapidly and undeveloped, natural areas are being lost to development. This need can be satisfied in part by providing access to nature-based parks but to be truly “nearby”, nature needs to be integrated into the built environment, into residential developments, roadways, bike/pedestrian facilities, and other public landscapes.

Recapture Rural Character, Natural Functions through Concurrent Reclamation

Aggregate mining is an historic land use in the corridor but recent permitting of large tracts of land for mining worsens concern about the negative impact of mining on the character and natural functions of the river corridor. Although many legacy mines have evolved into wildlife habitat with some natural functions, without the softening effect of time, traditional drag line operations leave, as seen along FM 973, unsightly spoil piles and unnatural land contours. Fortunately, “concurrent reclamation”, in which post-mined lands have the approximate contours and elevations of pre-mined lands and stockpiled topsoil replaced, will be used to close many of the sand and gravel mines that are slated for operation in the Colorado River Corridor over the next 25 years. As a result, the rural character and some natural functions of pre-mined lands will be recaptured in the long term.

Protect Land, Protect Water Resources

Conservation priorities in eastern Travis County pertain primarily to land resources – floodplains and prime farmland – whereas conservation priorities in western Travis County pertain primarily to surface and groundwater resources – Lake Travis, Pedernales River, their tributaries, and the Trinity-Edwards aquifer system. The strategy for protecting these different types of resources, however, is the same: protect land east and protect land – along critical water ways and in sensitive recharge areas – west.

PART 4: GROWTH GUIDANCE

A. Goals and Objectives

Goal A: Improve the Quality of Life of Travis County Residents

- Objective A-1: Maintain or improve standard of living (e.g., drinking water availability, congestion-free driving).
- Objective A-2: Maintain or improve community safety (e.g., hazard mitigation, roadway safety).
- Objective A-3: Provide facilities to support healthy lifestyles (e.g., parks, bike/ped trails).

Goal B: Optimize Benefits of Land and Water Resources

- Objective B-1: Protect the rural and natural character of Travis County.
- Objective B-2: Protect water resources.
- Objective B-3: Protect outdoor recreational opportunities.
- Objective B-4: Protect ecosystems and wild life habitat.
- Objective B-5: Enhance property values

Goal C: Optimize Use of Travis County Resources

- Objective C-1: Maximize value of CIP investments.
- Objective C-2: Distribute Travis County resources effectively.
- Objective C-3: Minimize loss-of-life and property damages to residents and county government.
- Objective C-4: Improve cost effectiveness of long-term operation and maintenance activities.
- Objective C-5: Optimize Travis County resources through leveraging.

B. Growth Guidance Principles

Support Campo “Centers” Concept

- reduces infrastructure and maintenance costs
- supports compact and connected growth
- provides walking and bike friendly communities
- reduces sprawl and land fragmentation
- encourages land use that supports transit
- protects land and water resources and air quality

Protect Prime Farmland, Endangered Species Habitat, and Aquifer Recharge Areas

- maximizes groundwater recharge
- protects surface water quality and springs
- provides wildlife habitat and corridors
- provides nature-based recreational opportunities
- preserves scenic and natural qualities of the rural landscape
- maintains local food production
- contributes to a quality of life that attracts tax-paying business and residents
- increases property value of residents adjacent to natural areas

Protect Uplands and Riparian Areas Adjacent to Significant Waterways

- mitigates storm water damage
- maximizes groundwater recharge
- attenuates polluted runoff
- provides nature and water-based recreational opportunities
- provides trail connectivity between residential, commercial, and other activity centers
- provides wildlife habitat and corridors
- preserves scenic and natural qualities of the rural landscape
- contributes to a quality of life that attracts tax-paying business and residents
- increases property value of residents adjacent to natural areas

C. POLICY (Examples of Questions to be answered)

Where do we encourage land being developed or conserved?

- Centers
- Corridors
- Parkland
- Conservation lands
- Endangered species habitat

How do we achieve desired land use patterns?

- Infrastructure investments (transportation, parks, and drainage systems)
- Conservation subdivision incentives
- Tax abatements (see PBO Economic Development Policy)
- Regulatory Powers

What are our critical BMPs/Quality standards?

- Land use compatibility
- Management of county lands
- Context sensitive design
- Sustainable roadsides
- Green building practices
- Dark skies
- Scenic roads
- Scientific public opinion surveys

How do we pay for county land, water, and transportation infrastructure?

- User Fees vs Property Taxes

How do we pay for growing O&M costs?

- User Fees vs Property Taxes

D. Growth Guidance Map (to be inserted)

PART 5: ACTION PLAN

ACTION WORKSHEET EXAMPLE 8/2/2013

POLICY X: Plan Connected Land, Water, and Transportation Systems

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES & LONG RANGE PLANNING

Development Services Review

Long Range Planning

LRP 1: Complete Arterial Plan

LRP 2: Complete Bike/Ped Trail Plan

Floodplain Management

NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Natural Resources

Environmental Quality

PARKS

Parks

P 1: Update Parks/Land Conservation Plan

P 2: Complete Gilleland Creek Master Plan

PUBLIC WORKS

CIP

Road and Bridge Maintenance

REAL ESTATE